

***NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE WESTERN REGION SUPPLEMENT 9-2002
APPLICABLE TO INSTRUCTIONS 10-911 and 10-921
DECEMBER 19, 2002***

***Operations and Services
Hydrologic Services, NWSPD 10-9
River Forecast Center Operations, NWSI 10-911
Weather Forecast Office of Hydrologic Operations, NWSI 10-921***

WESTERN REGION DROUGHT RELATED SERVICES AND SUPPORT

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Certified by: W/WR2 (R. Tibi)

Type of Issuance: Initial.

SUMMARY OF REVISIONS: This supplement supersedes Regional Operations Manual Letter (ROML) W-06-02, filed with WSOM E-21.

Signed

12/05/02

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Date

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<u>Table of Contents:</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. Description	2
2. Format and Procedures.....	2
2.1 Role of the NWS During Drought Conditions	2
2.2 WFO Drought Plans	2
2.3 Onset of Drought Related Services and Support	4
2.4 Methods for Providing Services and Support During Drought Conditions	4
2.5 Role of the SLO Office.	4
2.6 Coordination.	4
2.7 Drought Monitor.	5

Appendix

A. Examples

1 Items to Include in a Drought Plan	A-1
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1. Description: This supplement defines Western Region's policy on providing services and support during drought conditions.

2. Format and Procedures.

2.1 Role of the NWS During Drought Conditions: The role of the NWS during drought conditions is to provide pertinent hydrometeorological information and data to water managers, local, state and federal agencies and the media. The NWS does not declare when droughts begin or end. Close coordination between the weather forecast offices (WFOs), the river forecast centers (RFCs), and Western Region Headquarters is imperative to ensure that consistent information is disseminated.

WFOs are responsible for providing additional information and data to customers during drought conditions and for attending state, county, city and user group meetings related to the drought. RFCs are responsible for providing any additional guidance or support that the WFOs may need to meet customer needs.

2.2 WFO Drought Plans: Each WR WFO will develop a drought plan to ensure that the office's responsibilities outlined in this supplement are met. The drought plan will describe procedures to be followed during drought conditions to ensure that the office is prepared to provide the necessary service and support. Each state liaison office (SLO) will have a copy of the drought plan of each WFO in the state. Appendix 1 contains a list of items to include in a WFO drought plan.

Each MIC will designate a drought information officer (DIO). The service hydrologist, senior service hydrologist, hydrology focal point or climate focal point should serve as DIO. In some cases the meteorologist in charge (MIC) will serve as DIO (see section on Role of the SLO). The

DIO is responsible for monitoring hydrometeorological conditions, coordinating with other NWS offices, coordinating customer needs, and ensuring that the appropriate products are issued. The DIO is also responsible for developing and updating the office drought plan and ensuring the staff receives training regarding the drought plan. The plan should be filed with the hydrologic services manual (HSM), and referenced in the station duty manual (SDM).

2.3 Onset of Drought Related Services and Support: The WFOs will provide additional information and data to customers and attend drought-related meetings when:

- a. A drought has been declared (by the state, a county, or other officials) in the hydrologic services area (HSA).
- b. Conditions are dry enough to cause elevated concern among the public, the media or other agencies with water resources interests.

When the public, media, and other agencies no longer have concerns about dry conditions, the WFO may terminate their drought-related activities, after coordination with all involved parties.

2.4 Methods for Providing Services and Support During Drought Conditions:

- a. WFOs will issue additional products under the hydrologic outlook product header (AWIPS identifier ESFxxx) to relay drought-related information and data to interested customers. The information may also be distributed in graphical format if this better serves the needs of the customers. The types of data and information to incorporate in these products include, but are not limited to:
 - (1) Monthly and seasonal precipitation totals versus normals
 - (2) Low flow forecasts
 - (3) Information on how conditions are expected to change

For some offices, the drought-related information may be integrated in the water supply outlook product instead of issuing separate ESF products when both products need to be issued at about the same time.

- b. Drought-related information and links should be posted on the WFO's web page, especially when public concern over drought conditions is high.
- c. The MIC, his/her designee, or DIO will attend meetings related to drought and provide briefings as needed.

2.5 Role of the SLO Office: When drought conditions extend over several HSAs within a state, the MIC of SLO will be the voice of the NWS when coordinating with state agencies (the only exception is California which has two SLOs). This voice will be the MIC of the SLO. The SLO MIC or his/her appointee will represent the NWS at state agency meetings. The SLO may issue drought-related products for the state, as described in the section above, on behalf of all the

offices in the state. This will be done in coordination with all affected DIOs in the state and the supporting RFC(s).

2.6 Coordination: WFOs are responsible for notifying the SLO, adjacent WFOs, supporting RFCs and Western Region's Hydrology and Climate Services Division (HCSD) when abnormally dry conditions exist or when a drought has been declared.

2.7 Drought Monitor: The drought monitor is a national product produced by the Climate Prediction Center, USDA, and the Drought Mitigation Center. The NWS is one of many agencies providing input to this product. The WR climate program manager will coordinate the contents of the Drought Monitor with affected WFOs.

APPENDIX 1

ITEMS TO INCLUDE IN A DROUGHT PLAN

The drought plan outlines procedures to follow during drought conditions in a WFO's area of responsibility. The plan should include at a minimum:

Description of Local Characteristics of Abnormally Dry Conditions: Climate and water interests vary greatly across Western Region, and therefore each WFO is the expert on what is considered abnormally dry conditions in the HSA. For guideline purposes, conditions are considered abnormally dry in an area when less than 60% of normal precipitation has been observed during 1) a locally determined time period, 2) or the current water year, and/or 3) the water supply stands at less than 60% of normal (however, this may depend on previous years' conditions). Each WFO should further refine these thresholds to better reflect conditions in the HSA.

Products to be Issued During Drought Conditions: The plan should describe when to start and stop issuing drought-related products as described in this supplement, the frequency of issuance of these products (in many cases the products are issued every other week), and the format and contents of the products. An example of a drought related ESF should be included as well.

Coordination: The plan should include who to coordinate with, and a list of typical agencies involved with drought assessment/response in the WFO's area.

RFC Support: The plan should describe what services are available from the supporting RFCs during abnormally dry conditions. Specific RFC services to support drought should be coordinated with the RFCs by the DIO.